Luis Valdez

~Early Works

Actos

BERNABE

Pensamiento Serpentino

Luis Valdez—Early Works: Actos, Bernabé and Pensamiento Serpentino

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TORRES: Nice and cool, eh? Pos, qué suave. Chihuahua, it's hot, hombre! The sun went down and the night stayed hot. What are you doing here so late?

BERNABE: Nothing. (*Hiding his handful of dirt.*)

TORRES: And that beer?

BERNABE: My primo bought it for me. We came to look for work.

TORRES: So where's Eddie? Inside?

BERNABE: (*Nodding.*) Talking to Torres.

TORRES: Oh sí, eh? And who am I? La Luna?

BERNABE: (*Startled.*) Chale.

TORRES: (*Laughs.*) No, ¿verdad? There's the moon up there. Look how big she is! I wonder if she's jealous? The moon's a woman too, eh? Or maybe not. Maybe he's the brother of your ruca. Watch it, Bernabé, he's gonna take her away!

BERNABE: ¡Pura madre! Nobody can take her away!

TORRES: Well, don't get pissed.

BERNABE: She's mine. (*Looks at his handful.*)

TORRES: (*Tongue in cheek.*) Then tell that to the gabachos. See if they give her back.

BERNABE: What gabachos?

TORRES: The landowners, manito. Banks, corporations.

BERNABE: They ain't nobody.

TORRES: (*Pause.*) Hey – and if I wanted the land too, Bernabé? What do I do?

BERNABE: (*Laughs.*) Aguántate. You just wait!

TORRES: But she's my mamá.

BERNABE: ¿La tierra?

TORRES: Sure. She's your momma too.

BERNABE: Up yours! She's not my mother.

TORRES: Bueno, your hot momma, then. But look how the ranchers treat her, hombre. They sell her whenever they feel like it – to the highest bidder! See those fields over there? I just bought 'em yesterday. I own the ground under your feet too. All the lots on this street. And I got more on the other side

of the barrio. Check it out. But you know what, loco? I'll rent her to you. (*Laughs.*) Give me a few bucks, and I'll let you have her—for the night! (BERNABE *is genuinely puzzled. He finds* TORRES*'s reasoning totally nonsensical.*)

BERNABE: Say, Torres, you're even crazier than me! (*Laughs.*) ¡Ah, qué Torres!

TIO: (*Entering.*) ¡Oye tú! Where you been?

BERNABE: Right here.

TIO: What are you up to, hombre? Why did you leave the bar? (*Spots* TORRES.) Oh, buenas noches, Señor Torres.

TORRES: Buenas . . . (*Suspicious.*) What's up, Teodoro?

TIO: (*Nervous.*) No, nothing, this burro . . . I don't know why I got into this! Eddie brought him here . . . to do him a favor . . . (*Barking at* BERNABE.) Let's go inside, ándale! Your cousin already went up with the vieja. He said to get ready.

TORRES: No, hombre! He's going in with Connie?

TIO: Pos sí, if she lets him in.

TORRES: (*Smiles.*) Sure she'll let him. She does what I tell her.

TIO: My nephew's already talking her into it.

TORRES: So you're going to get laid, eh Bernabé?

BERNABE: (*Getting scared.*) I want another beer.

TIO: There's no more. Go do your duty!

TORRES: Don't rush him, hombre. This is an occasion. Come on in. So you're finally going to get married, eh loco?

TIO: ¡Qué pinche vergüenza! (*Exits.*)

FOUR

Torres Club—interior. The upstairs hallway of a cheap hotel. PRIMO *enters, his arm around* CONSUELO.

PRIMO: Orale, Connie, gracias for doing me this favor, eh?

CONSUELO: It's no favor, man. You gotta pay me.

PRIMO: Simón, but the vato's muy especial, you know?
CONSUELO: Who is this jerk?
PRIMO: My cousin.
CONSUELO: Who?
PRIMO: Bernabé.
CONSUELO: (*Nonplussed.*) You mean . . . el loquito del pueblo? Sorry, Eddie, I'm sorry, but no dice.
PRIMO: ¿Por qué no?
CONSUELO: Because, porque no. How do I know what he's gonna do? Because he's crazy, that's why!
PRIMO: He's not that loco, chula. He just needs a little break.
CONSUELO: Well, it's not me, man.
PRIMO: Look, it's no big deal. I'm asking you to do the vato a favor. He's my primo—sure he's missing a few marbles, but so what? He's got everything else. Andale, chula—just for a little bit. I promised him—it's his birthday.
CONSUELO: (*Pause.*) Give me fifteen bucks and he's on.
PRIMO: Fifteen bolas? What are you—gold-plated down there? (CONNIE *starts to go.*) No, look, Connie—don't be that way. Besides, all I got are nine bills, see? Here. (*Gives her the money.*)
CONSUELO: (*Takes it reluctantly.*) Bueno, okay. But just one turn on the merry-go-round and that's it. Where's the loco at?
PRIMO: He's coming with el tío—they had a beer first.
CONSUELO: Tío?
PRIMO: Teodoro.
CONSUELO: That winito's your tío?
PRIMO: Simón, and also Bernabé's.
CONSUELO: And is his mamá here too?
PRIMO: Chale, what's with you?
CONSUELO: Naranjas, corazón. Okay, send him in, pues. (CONSUELO *exits into her room.*)
TIO: (*Offstage.*) Guaro?
PRIMO: Orale, tío—up here.

BERNABE: La Luna. For being dirty.
PRIMO: That's bullshit, primo. Come on, you saw Connie. You liked what you saw, right?
BERNABE: Yeah.
PRIMO: Well then? Go see it all.
BERNABE: Not now.
PRIMO: Why not?
BERNABE: I don't feel like it.
TIO: You felt like it downstairs.
BERNABE: (*Turning.*) I want another beer first.
TIO: Later—afterward.
PRIMO: You have to go in now, primo. She's waiting for you. Besides, I already paid her . . . twenty bucks. Okay?
BERNABE: I don't think so.
TIO: But didn't you hear, hombre. He already paid the vieja!
BERNABE: I don't give a shit. I don't want that vieja!
TIO: Bueno, if he's not going in . . . (*Pause.*) He's not going in. Take the idiot home, and that's it.
CONSUELO: (*At her door.*) Eddie? Oye, Eddie? ¿Qué pasó, pues?
PRIMO: Hold it a second.
CONSUELO: Hold it yourself! Tell him to hurry. (*She retreats into her room.*)
PRIMO: You see? She wants you to go in.
TIO: And to hurry.
PRIMO: Come on, ese. I know you want to.
TIO: Sure, he wants to. ¡Está buenota, hombre! I wouldn't hold back.
BERNABE: Then, you get in there.
TIO: Don't be an idiot! Qué caray, I would if I could, but I can't no more. She's more than I can handle. Here, have a drink—to give you strength. (*Gives him a swig of his beer.*)
PRIMO: Okay, pues, get in there, cuz!
TIO: Be a man, m'ijo. (BERNABE *starts to move toward* CONSUELO*'s door again. Cautiously, he is about to enter,*

but he stops and beats a retreat.)

BERNABE: (*Backing off again.*) Chale, I can't!

TIO: (*Cursing.*) ¡Me lleva la . . . que me trajo! This is a jackass without a rope, hombre.

PRIMO: (*Giving up.*) Simón, let's go, pues.

BERNABE: Where we going?

PRIMO: Home to your chante.

BERNABE: Nel, I wanna booze it up.

TIO: We alreday boozed it up.

BERNABE: Just one.

TIO: (*Exasperated.*) N'ombre! This fool don't want a puta, he wants a peda. Better take him home, Guaro. Before he gets drunk.

BERNABE: I'm not going to get drunk, oiga!

PRIMO: Let's go, Bernabé.

BERNABE: No! I wanna stay here.

TIO: Your madre's waiting for you.

BERNABE: ¡Me importa madre! They're waiting for me here too.

TIO: (*Shoving him toward the door.*) Then, get in there!

BERNABE: (*Pause.*) No . . . she'll swallow me.

PRIMO: (*Tries to pull him.*) Let's go, ese.

BERNABE: No!

TIO: ¡Andale! Grab him! (PRIMO *and* TIO *grab* BERNABE.)

BERNABE: (*Resisting.*) No! Nooo! I wanna drink! I wanna viejaaa! I want la tierraaa! (CONSUELO *comes out of her room in a nightgown.*)

CONSUELO: Oye, oye, what's happening, Eddie?

PRIMO: Nothing. We're going.

CONSUELO: ¿Qué pasó? Isn't he coming in?

PRIMO: Chale.

TIO: He's crazy. (CONSUELO *comes up to* BERNABE, *mockingly wanton, sultrily flaunting her body before his gaping eyes.*)

CONSUELO: ¿Qué pasó, Bernabé? You don't want to come

with me? You know me, ¿qué no? I'm Consuelo—la Connie. Come on, gimme a little hug. (BERNABE *retreats.*) Andale, hombre—don't back away! Eddie tells me you like las chavalonas. Is that true, eh? Mira—gimme your hand like this . . . and now we put it here. (*She wraps his arm around her.* BERNABE *opens his fist—the handful of earth falls to the floor.*) Like novios, see? Do you want to dance? I have a record player in my room. Come on, let's go to the baile . . . (*She takes him to the door of her room.*) ¿Y ustedes? What are you gawking at? Get lost! Can't you see we're going on our honeymoon? (CONSUELO *laughs and closes the door, pulling in* BERNABE *with her.* PRIMO *approaches the dirt on the floor.*)

TIO: ¿Qué es eso? What did he drop?

PRIMO: Tierra . . . (*They look at each other.*) Come on, tío. I'll buy you a beer.

TIO: Let's go. This idiot nephew's driving me crazy! (*They exit.*)

FIVE

CONSUELO*'s room: darkness. A brief erotic silence, slowly punctuated by* CONSUELO*'s moans and the pounding of* BERNABE*'s heartbeat.*

CONSUELO: (*In the dark.*) Ay, papasito . . . Ay, ay, ¡AY!

BERNABE: (*Screaming.*) ¡AYYY!

CONSUELO: (*Pause.*) Bernabé?

BERNABE: ¡Quítate! ¡AYYYY!

CONSUELO: Shut up, hombre! ¿Qué tienes?

BERNABE: No, mamá, yo no hice nadaaaa!

CONSUELO: Are you going nuts on me?

BERNABE: Mamá! Mamáááá! (*Strobe light effect, slow to fast.* BERNABE *is backing away from* CONSUELO*—or at least the* MADRE *dressed in* CONSUELO*'s clothes. The*